

professional men, are to be submitted to the decision of—what? not a jury of architects, certainly, not a jury of artists, not a jury of amateurs, but a committee of gentlemen, it may be of highly honourable purpose, but many of them hardly capable of understanding a map or ground plan—gentlemen who would not defraud their neighbours of an ounce in the weight of a commodity, or a yard in the award of his land, but who little think how huge a fraud they are now thrown upon the risk of committing, and which it is a hundred to one but they do commit. Here they have placed before them a number of beautiful designs, things far beyond their powers of production, and yet, strange to say, not thought to be beyond their powers of adjudication. This sort of committee we admit again is frequently made up of most worthy persons in their respective walks of life, who would scorn to do an injury or an injustice designedly; aye, and who would shrink from the discharge of duties for which they considered themselves inadequate; but in the case of architectural competition, without reflection, constitute themselves a jury to determine on the superior artistic merit of sixty to one hundred competitors; not only dealing with the question of property, that is, of every man's absolute interest to the extent of his outlay, and the value of his plans, which may be of many hundreds of pounds, but with his professional fame. The thing is monstrous, and will come to be regarded as such when "THE BUILDER" has outlived a year or two, and become the recording page of disquisitions on this subject. Yes, and men will shrink from the assumption of such power; they will as soon grasp at the reins of the national government.

But we will put the case again; for it is only by constant iteration that great enormities or absurdities are exposed, or that men can be stirred up to the rectification of things.

Recurring to the case of one of these large competitions, we will take the instance of one in particular of the competitions. Say it is a town hall, a music hall, a public school, an Exchange, or the like. Here we have before us one of the ardent and devoted students of a superior profession, one who has spent his thrice seven years, it may be, in all that labour of research, calculation, trial, in that union of mathematical investigation and practice, with the cultivation of taste which are required to fit him to be the professor of so distinguished an art and science. He has entered into this competition heart and soul, early and late he is engaged in it; his thoughts at every leisure and out of leisure are absorbed by it; he rakes together every particular to bear upon the question; he consults authorities, weighs, rejects, adopts,—brings more intense anxiety, in fact, to bear upon some one point of his composition, than his judges will give to the whole; aye, and even to the whole labours of all the competitors. Well, after two or three weeks of this species of deliberation, more anxious and more constrained to his subject than if there were a reality and a certainty about his success, he next engages in the more mechanical duty of completing his finished draughts upon paper; he goes on labouring with his assistants, bestowing all the care of the practised and the skilful hand, and produces a volume of beautiful drawings and writings, each sheet worth their covering in coin; they are completed and despatched; he now snatches a little repose from his labours, and indulges for the day or two that he knows his designs are in transit, in the first moment of comparative indifference; all the rest is, as we have said, anxiety and solicitude. His drawings arrive at their destination—they are opened out with the irreverent hand of some attorney's clerk, who, with his master, views these productions of the artist's hand and the philosophic mind with much less gusto than an engrossed parchment, or even the draft of a lease or bond—the drawings are laid out, and fumbled over by a few privileged committee-men and a little knot of "picture fanciers," or, as they are esteemed, great judges of "pretty" designs; the effects of a previous canvas begin to exhibit themselves; favourites, personal favourites, have their mottoes deciphered, if indeed such process were necessary from its being too well understood beforehand.

(To be continued.)

PROPOSED BUILDERS' COMPANY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BUILDER.

DEAR SIR,—If I have any foresight of the progress of THE BUILDER, judging that it will be conducted in a gentlemanly manner, I should say that it will be supported by all classes.

Looking at the great bulk of property erected daily and yearly, the thousands of builders, joiners, carpenters, masons, and others existing in this country at all times, I would suggest to your subscribers that a new Builders' Company should be formed on the same principle as the Goldsmiths', and other great important companies now in existence, and whose accumulated wealth at all times affords a relief to thousands in distress, in sickness, and in decrepit old age.

Such a company would, in my opinion, be soon formed and established; THE BUILDER would, by that means, be read in all parts of the United Kingdom. In order to effect this humane society, let a committee be formed, a prospectus issued, and rules and regulations drawn up, and secretaries and other officers appointed, in London and all the principal towns in the kingdom. Such an institution may be like Solomon's Temple: "And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither." You may command my best exertions in this part of the country.

Leeds.

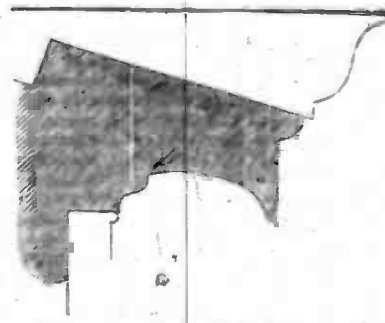
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ON MOULDINGS FOR CORNICES.

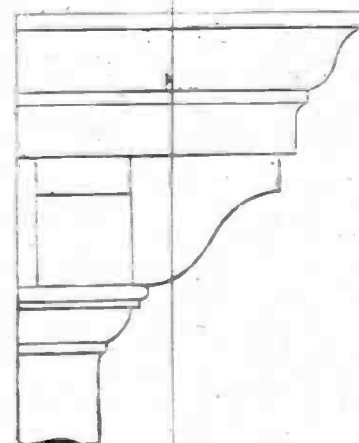
We have this day, without any fixed system, or a view to consecutive arrangement, laid hold of one subject for illustration, by way of directing the attention of the workman to a beginning point in the consideration of what is proper and reasonable as regards the application and character of mouldings—and the instance we have chosen is that of cornices. A large majority of our ordinary houses display no higher pretensions in the way of exterior ornament than a cornice at the eaves of the roof, or to the shop front, or to the principal door-stead, and therefore to lay down a rule by which the workman may be guided towards correctness in this particular may be a more practical lesson than to dilate upon greater refinements, such as styles and orders, which appertain to structures of greater pretension, and where an architect is expected to preside. We know well that most workmen, in following out their fancy in the selection of mouldings, seldom pursue any such rule as is suggested by the following guiding considerations; but if they did, we are sure the result would be much more satisfactory to themselves, and we need not say, more conducive to a fixedness of judgment or taste—the rule we allude to arises from considerations as to the object required, and the material employed. It is quite clear that a difference should prevail in the case of using stone or wood—the mouldings should be different, and the general form and character of the cornice. Stone should represent its own massiveness, and not be cut or moulded so much as when a lighter material is used. Wood will admit of greater projections, and more play of appropriation—the cornice of wood may shelter the house front more than the stone can be adapted for; but where the projection is large, a reasonable amount of support should be provided in the way of truss, cantaliver, block, or bracket. Stone will require more of this support than wood; that is, the blocks more frequent and more massive; and with attention to these particulars, wooden cornices may be applied equal in beauty and appropriateness to the best in stone—propriety is the first element of beauty.

We shall not further enter into this subject on the present occasion than to give examples of the ancient methods of cornices: the first is from the Greek, the next from the Roman, and the third from the Gothic style. These were all executed in marble and stone, and exhibit much variety; but yet are all of them characteristic of the material used. It may be questioned, however, whether the Gothic cornice is not the least to be admired or approved of in this respect. The fourth example is one that will afford a little amusement, being brought in the way of contrast, and the first that presented itself to our eyes in the way of "carpenter's style" of the modern taste. It will dispose many to smile, and yet we are bold enough to avow that we prefer it;

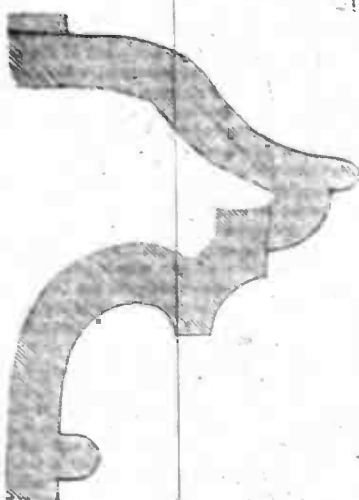
as being in wood, to the scores of repetitions in the same material of massive cornices borrowed from stone exemplars. The rude and inartistic way of moulding will be objected to, but the propriety of application of the slab or plank of timber is as defensible on every ground of reasoning, as that of the stone or marble in the best of the three of its predecessors. The main principle observed is right, and we shall take occasion to pursue the subject on this assumption, and to give a few forms of cornices where more appropriate mouldings are combined.



Greek Cornice.



Roman Cornice.



Gothic Cornice.



Modern Cornice.